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ADMIRAL SAYS CALLS IN U.S. ARE OVERHEARD

Security Agency Chief Tells Senate
Panel of 'Inadvertent Pickups'

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WASHINGTON, July 21—Vice Adm. Bobby R. Inman, head of the National Security Agency, said today that his agency had made what he called "inadvertent pickups" of the telephone conversations of United States citizens.

Admiral Inman added, however, that no United States citizen was currently the target of surveillance by the agency and that the information that had been collected accidentally had been "destroyed and not used in any way" under guidelines established by the Justice Department.

Admiral Inman's statement that some telephone calls were accidentally collected by the security agency, made in testimony before the Senate Subcommittee on Intelligence and Human Rights, appeared to be a most direct public acknowledgment that the N.S.A. monitors telephone traffic in the United States.

Bayh Voices Alarm

It came two days after Senator Birch Bayh, the subcommittee's chairman, said that the agency "has a massive capacity to monitor communications" of Americans and that an electronic surveillance bill now under consideration by the Congress would not limit the secret activities of the agency.

The National Security Agency, a highly secret part of the Department of Defense, conducts electronic intelligence activities both here and abroad and is responsible for protecting United States Government communication links against intrusions.

Admiral Inman's comments came at the end of a hearing in which Adm. Stansfield Turner, Director of Central Intelligence; Harold J. Saunders, director of the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research, and Herbert J. Hansell, a State Department legal adviser, discussed the proposed legislation designed to restrict electronic surveillance.